

A Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

YOU are pleased, Sir, to demand of me, *the general Reasons*; why the Unitarians (or as others now call us, the Socinians) have departed from the *Catholic Doctrines* of the Trinity and Incarnation: in which all other Sects and Denominations of Christians do agree; and contend also for them as *Fundamental Doctrines*?

'Tis true, Sir, that we are alone, in our Belief or Opinion of but one GOD, or (what is the same) *but one who is GOD*; even the GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: And as we are alone, so we are a *little Flock*: If our Reasons were no more considerable than our Number, we should be very contemptible to our Opposers. The Case was once otherwise; there is no Ecclesiastical Historian but has noted the time, when *All the World was against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the World*. But it avails very little, that we can say, *Enimvero Tres, sunt Ilium*. And that which you have demanded of me, is, *What are our Reasons*; not how it has come to pass (or by what Persecutions) we have been reduced to so small a Number?

I answer therefore; Our *first Reason* is,

'The Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, have no solid or good Foundation in *Revelation*, or Holy Scripture.

A Stranger in this Controversy, who hears the Sermons or reads the Books of some of our Opposers, would think, that the Question between us and the Trinitarians is on their side as clear in Revelation, as 'tis confess'd to be on ours in Point of Reason:

for this is the Fault with which they continually charge us, that we exalt Reason above Revelation; and that we pretend, that a Force, how great soever, is to be put upon the Words of Revelation, rather than we will admit of any Doctrine which is contrary to Reason.

Now, First; 'Tis not true, that we prefer our Reason before Revelation: On the contrary, Revelation being what GOD himself hath said, either immediately, or by inspired Persons; 'tis to be preferred before the clearest Demonstration of our Reason. But because we cannot suppose, without Disrespect and Injury to GOD, to his *Goodness* and *Veracity*, that he has so made us that our *Faculties* should be deceived, in what they *clearly* and *distinctly* perceive; and because GOD hath in Revelation frequently appealed to our Faculties, to our Understanding and Reason; therefore we conclude, that what is clearly and distinctly discerned by Reason as true or false, is so. And from thence we infer; that what is false in Reason, can never be true in Revelation, or by Revelation. So that whatsoever in Revelation doth seem to contradict Reason, can be nothing but our Blunder; our unskilful injudicious and too close Adherence to the mere Letter and Words of Revelation.

'Tis so true, that we ought to interpret the most clear Revelation, so as not to contradict evident Reason; that if we neglect this Rule, we shall oft times make Revelations contrary to, and inconsistent with it self; as well as to or with Reason: We shall be forced (for Instance) to say, the Lord Christ is a

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Rock, a Way, a true Vine, a Door, and twenty more such different and contrary things; because Revelation has clearly and expressly called him all these.

I desire therefore to know, Why our Opposers take care not to make themselves contemptible by maintaining 'tis a *Scripture-Doctrine*, that the Lord Christ is a *Rock, a Way, a true Vine, a Door*; on the Account that such a Doctrine, though founded on the express Words of Holy Scripture, is contrary to Reason: and yet have no regard to avoid the Imputation of Folly, Incoherence and Inadvertence, by contending this is a *Scripture-Doctrine*, which is no less contrary to Reason and natural Light; even this, that there are three Almighty and Infinite Persons, and yet but one GOD. No Man ever had by *Nature or Reason*, nor can have any other Notion of Three Gods, but only this; *Three Infinite and Almighty Persons*. Is it supposable, that GOD should give forth contrary Manifestations of himself? that he should teach us by *Nature and Reason*, to apprehend one GOD as but one Almighty and Infinite Person; and yet command us by *Revelation* to believe, one GOD is Three such Persons? Or can we our selves obey contrary Commands, or believe contrary Manifestations, concerning the same thing, at the same time?

This Foundation being laid, we say, Three Divine Persons, an Almighty Father, an Almighty Son, and an Almighty Spirit, distinct from both, being in *Reason and common Sense* but the Periphrasis and Circumlocution for Three Gods; so that we can have no other Conception of Three Gods, but only Three such Persons: that *Revelation* which (by Confession of all Parties) obliges me to believe but one GOD; can never be supposed to require me to believe Three Almighty Persons.

So also, Reason assuring me, that the Disproportion between Infinite and Finite is such, that they can never be commensurate, or made one and the same: That Revelation, or Holy Scripture, which tells me GOD is in-

finite; that the *Heaven of Heavens* contains him not; cannot be interpreted or understood as bidding me believe, that a Person who is GOD or an Infinite Person (and such, they say, every Person of the Trinity is) can be *Whole and All Incarnate*, that is, united and commensurate to a finite Man.

We abide, Sir, by this Argument; here we fix our Foot, never to be removed: that the Inconsistence of the Trinity, and the Incarnation with Reason and natural Knowledge, being undeniably evident, therefore those Doctrines can have no real Foundation in Divine Revelation, that is to say, in Holy Scripture.

But, Secondly, As we consider that though Revelation is to be preferred before Reason; and always interpreted by Reason, for the Causes already given: so we cannot but profess our selves surprized, that any should have the Confidence to pretend, that there is *clear and express Revelation*, on behalf of the Trinity and Incarnation? In the Name of Wonder, what do these Gentlemen mean by *express and clear Revelation*: do they mean that they have found out some Texts, which directly and expressly say, *There is a Trinity of Divine Persons, who are but one GOD*; or which say, *The Son or second Person of the Trinity was incarnate*? If they have any such Texts to produce; we shall grant them, they have an *express Revelation* for those Doctrines. But in very Deed they mean no such thing: but by *clear and express Revelation* they mean what was never meant by any but themselves; nor by themselves in any other Case or Question, but this of the Trinity. They mean, the Trinity and Incarnation are provable, by certain most remote and strained Consequences, from some such Texts of Revelation or Scripture; as either are of *suspected Authority* and Credit in the Original, among the Learned of their own Party; or are denied by the Learnedest of their own side, to be truly translated, or finally are interpreted by their own principal Criticks, in such manner as Socinians and Unitarians interpret them. What is this but to say, that is an *express Revelation*,

velation, which is only an harsh and doubtful Consequence, framed by themselves; and that is a clear Revelation for these Doctrines, which the best and most knowing of their own Party interpret to a contrary Sense?

Perhaps, Sir, you may be a little surpris'd at what I here affirm: but so it is, and I make challenge to any of our Opposers to convict me of Falshood; that there is no Text of Holy Scripture alledged for the Trinity or Incarnation, which all the *Catholic* Doctors, and some or other of the most discerning and eminent Interpreters and Critics of the *Protestants*, have not acknowledged, that 'tis not to the purpose of the Trinity or Incarnation. The Texts that are cited for the Trinity or Incarnation, are either out of the Old Testament, or out of the New.

As to the Texts of the Old Testament, the Learned among our Opposers (of all Persuasions) laugh at those that pretend to find the Trinity or the Incarnation, in the Books of the Old Testament: 'Tis universally agreed among the more Learned Trinitarians, that (to use the Words of an Author and Book, licensed by the famous Faculty of the Sorbon) *Ex veteri Testamento nihil præter umbras, i. e.* 'There is nothing urged for the Trinity out of any Book or Books of the Old Testament, but mere Umbrages and Shadows. *J. Salabert. Heres. domitæ, par. 2da.*

Then for the New Testament, all the *Catholic* Doctors own, what D. Petavius (the most learned Writer of the most learned Order among them) has thought fit to express in these Words. 'They that would prove the Trinity out of only the Words of Scripture, without taking to their Aid the Churches Interpretation and Authority, *Suadant plus satis, & suo artificio vincuntur, i. e.* 'They swear to no purpose; and are beaten at their own Weapon (*Scripture*) by their Adversaries the Socinians and Arians. D. Petav. de Trin. l. 3. c. 11. §. 9.

Protestants indeed have been somewhat more careful of such free and general Acknowledgments; because they know there is

no trusting to Tradition, and the Authority of the Fathers; on which the *Catholics* (so called) wholly rely in these Questions. Notwithstanding, even *Protestants* have, among them, given up to us, all their Scripture-Strengths. That Text cannot be named, which some or other of the Learnedest *Protestants* have not, either interpreted as 'tis interpreted by Socinians and Arians; or expressly said, 'twas not intended by the inspired Author concerning the Incarnation or Trinity, or any Person therein. I demand such a Text of our Opposers; and do here profess, that if they name it not, 'tis because they cannot.

I will leave it here with you, Sir, Whether this *first* be not a just Exception to these Doctrines: even this, that they have no sufficient Foundation in Holy Scripture, by Confession of the most and the learnedest of our Opposers; and that being evidently false in Reason, they cannot possibly be true in Divine Revelation or Scripture.

Our Second Reason against them, is;

'There has never yet been any Apology or Defence made (nor can be) for the confessed Inconsistency of these Doctrines with Reason; but what is equally applicable to the Transubstantiation, or any other absurd and impossible Doctrine.

Our Opposers being sensible, how great a Prejudice 'tis to their Cause, that their Doctrines are so directly contrary to Reason, so utterly inconsistent with our natural Knowledge and congenit Notions; which were given us by GOD to be Tests or Touch-stones, whereby to discern Truth from Falshood: they have therefore turned themselves all ways, to find a Remedy for this Evil.

The *Sum* and *Force* of what they have been observed to say, either in their Books or Sermons, is as follows. 'The Trinity and Incarnation are indeed incomprehensible Mysteries: but Almighty God hath a Right to require of us, to believe on his Word what we do not comprehend or understand. He has already posed us with divers Mysteries and (seeming) Contradictions to our Reason and Capacities, in finite, visible and ordinary

ordinary Objects; thereby to prepare and dispose us, to receive with an humble Faith, what he shall please to reveal in his Word, concerning Objects invisible and infinite. Whatsoever is matter of *pure* and *mere* Revelation, is not to be judged by either Reason or Sense: concerning such things there is a Necessity to acquiesce in Revelation only; how unaccountable and wonderful soever they may seem. And if Revelation is so express and clear concerning them; that we would believe, were it not for their (supposed) Contradiction to Reason: in that case Reason must submit to Revelation; else we fall into the horrible both Impiety and Foolery, of giving the Lie to God, and preferring our Knowledge before his. What is the Union of the Soul with the Body? how do the Parts of Matter hold together? are Bodies made up of divisible Parts, or of indivisible? If we cannot answer these, and divers such like Questions, without involving our selves in great Difficulties, and even in Contradictions: Why do we wonder, that there may be some (seeming) Contradictions, in what we are taught about the Divine Nature, or GOD? Which of the Attributes of GOD is not as incomprehensible, as the Trinity or the Incarnation? Do we comprehend GOD's Eternity, by which he possesses eternal Life, *all at once*; or his Immensity, by which he is *whole and all* present in every Point of Space? Can a finite Mind comprehend Infinite Wisdom, Infinite Justice, infinite Power, or ought else that is infinite?

How many have been as confident, that the very Notion of a Spirit implies a Contradiction; and that 'tis not possible there should be *Antipodes*: as any Unitarian can be; that the *Trinity* is a Contradiction to Reason, and the *Incarnation* impossible? This should make us cautious and modest; it should serve to instruct us, that 'tis easy for us to mistake our own Shallowness, and our Errors, for Impossibilities and Contradictions to true Reason.

Finally, As hot as the Unitarians are against *Mysteries*, and *incomprehensible things*; themselves, for all that, advance as many and as great, as those which they oppose.

You know, Sir, that I have elsewhere answer'd particularly and severally, to all the Parts of this Defence: but here I will be content to answer in general; that *what will prove every thing, will prove nothing*. This Defence or Proof will serve as well for the Transubstantiation, or any other absurd and impossible Doctrine, as for the Trinity or Incarnation.

I am resolv'd to keep close to *clear and express* Revelation: therefore our Saviour himself having said expressly, that he is *Ἀληθὶνὸν αἰνδρῶν, the true Vine*, John 15. 1. I maintain that as 'twas certain by Sense to those who conversed with him, that he was a true and very *Man*, so 'tis certain by *Revelation* that he was also a true and very *Vine*. That any Person should be a true Man and yet a true Vine, is indeed an *incomprehensible Mystery*: but Almighty God hath a Right to require of us, to believe on his Word, what we cannot comprehend or understand. He hath already pos'd us with divers Mysteries and (seeming) Contradictions, in visible and ordinary Objects, both of Sense and Reason: thereby to prepare and dispose us, to receive with an humble Faith, what himself should reveal in his Word. That the Lord Christ is a true Man, and at the same time a true and very Vine, is a Point of *pure* and *mere* Revelation; and no way knowable by Sense or Reason: therefore as to his *Viney* Nature we ought to acquiesce in Revelation, without further Scruple or Inquiry. The Revelation concernig it, is so *clear and express*, *I am Ἀληθὶνὸν αἰνδρῶν, the true Vine*; that to quarrel with this Doctrine, is to give the Lie to God, and prefer our Knowledge before his. What is the Union of the Soul with the Body? How do the Parts of Matter hold together? Are Bodies made up of divisible Parts, or of indivisible? If we cannot answer to these and such like Questions; without involving our selves

in great Difficulties, and even in Contradictions: Why do we admire that there may be some (seeming) Contradictions, in our Lord Christ's being both a Man and a Vine? Do we better comprehend, how GOD possesses eternal Life *all at once*; or how he is *whole and all* present to every several Point of Space: than we apprehend, how the Lord Christ may be both a Man and a Vine? Who can comprehend infinite Wisdom, infinite Justice, or ought else that is infinite? but if we do not comprehend those Attributes, why do we pretend to comprehend the Extent of infinite Power; or to say of it, *Hilberto shalt thou come, and no further*; thou canst make a Man or a Vine, but canst not make an *humane Vine*, or a *Viney Man*? How many have been as confident, that the very Notion of a Spirit implies a Contradiction to our Reason; and that there can possibly be no *Antipodes*: as any *Anti-Scripturist* and *Idolator of Reason* can be, that 'tis a Contradiction and impossible, that a Man should be a true Vine, and a Vine a true Man? This should make us cautious and modest; it should serve to instruct us, that 'tis easy for us to mistake our own Shallowness and Errors, for Impossibilities and Contradictions to true Reason. And as hot as some (many perchance) be against this Scripture-Mystery, that a Man is both a Man and a Vine; themselves find greater Mysteries in the same Holy Scripture. 'Tis (for Example) a greater Leap from Finite to Infinite, and from Man to God; than from Man to Vine downwards, or from Vine to Man upwards: whatever Explication will make the former of these but *possible*, will make either of the other two *easy*. We shall have no Difficulty in apprehending; that a Man may be a Vine, and a Vine a Man; if we can get but the Glimpse of a Conception, how a Man may be GOD, or GOD a Man; or how there can be such a Person as GOD-MAN.

If you tell me, Sir, that this Parallel is somewhat too light in so serious and grave a Question, as that depending between us and

the Trinitarians; I must intreat you to show me, where I have made a false Step: for if I have made none, I must take leave to tell you; the Parallel is no more light than the Doctrines which gave occasion to it. Mean and childish Errors are never so effectually and successfully detected; as by the most familiar and easy Parallels: and he that makes the Comparison, is not to be blamed; but he or they that gave the Occasion of it. I think the Parallel I have made, serves to show, that we are new to talk of *clear Revelation* or *express Revelation*, in Excuse or Defence of absurd Doctrines: but that 'tis necessary to interpret all both *Speech* and *Writing*, in Consistence with common Sense and our natural Knowledge. In fine, it serves to establish this Rule; if the Person speaking or writing, is fallible, we must try the Truth of what is said or written, by *Reason*: but if he is infallible, 'tis always his meaning, that we should interpret what he hath said or written, by that Reason and according to those natural Notions, which he hath bestowed on us *cheerly for that purpose*.

I pass to our *Third Reason*, or third Exception, against these Doctrines.

These Doctrines are as little consistent with *Piety* toward GOD; as they are with *Reason* and with *natural Knowledge*.

Piety (in proper Speaking) is that part of the Christians Duty, which he owes to GOD. And though the Goodness of GOD had divers other *Ends* (Ends respecting the *Comfort and Good* of his Creatures) why he was pleased to make what he hath made: yet it becomes us to esteem and regard *Piety*, or our Duty and Service to GOD; as the *great End* that we ought to pursue.

The chief Parts or Branches of *Piety*, are *Praise, Love, Faith, Devotion, Obedience*. Let us see what Agreement these, or any of these, have with the Doctrines of which we are discoursing.

1. The respectful and thankful Recognition, both in our Minds, and by our Words, of the *Works* of God, and of his *Divine Attributes*; is what all Men call the *Praise* of GOD,

GOD. But doth he or she thus praise GOD, who ascribe his Works, Creation, Conservation, Miracles, all providential Acts, to any other Person or Persons besides him, who is indeed the Author of them? But when besides this, we give to the *Gods of our own devising*, the Glory of all the incommunicable Attributes, even *infinite and undevied Wisdom, Justice, Power and Goodness*; when we affirm, that in all these Properties they are equal to the *supream Father and GOD of Gods*: what farther *Detraction from his Praise* can be conceived, but absolute Atheism?

2. For the *LOVE of GOD*. How can we love the true God, in such manner as he requires, *with all the Heart, and all the Soul, and all the Mind*; if we have; and profess also to have as much Love for two other Persons, as for him who is the only true and legitimate Object of our *highest Love*? If we consider that Love which we owe to GOD, in its Causes; they are his *supream Excellence*, and his *Merit and Desert* towards us: if in its Effects they are a Conformity to his Will; a Readiness, Proneness and Desire to suffer the extremest Evils, for his Sake and Service. If therefore this Love be transferred, if it be communicated to other Objects, besides that one to which we owe it: We do *thereby and therein* ascribe to them his *Excellence*; we impute to them his *Merit*; we pay to them his *Dues*. Is it no Impiety, or rather is it not a deadly Wound to true Piety, thus to misplace the Propensions of our Minds, the Affections of our Hearts, the Life and Service of our whole Man?

3. I do not say, How *lame*, but what a *Monstrosity* is that *Faith*, that is made up of *contradictory Parts*; of Propositions that destroy one another; of such Inconsistencies, that in saying and affirming one, you (either expressly or implicitly) deny the other?

In their Doctrine of the *Incarnation* they tell us; an *infinite Person* is *whole and all united to a finite Man*. Is not this a *contradictory Faith*? doth it not confound Infinite with Finite, and make them to be all one? doth it

not destroy all the Demonstrations of *Geometry*; and thereby contradict both our *rational Faculties* and our *Senses*?

Their Doctrine of the *Trinity* is, in short, this. There are *three Infinite, Almighty, All-wise Persons, three external Beings, three absolutely-perfect Spirits*, and yet but *one GOD*. Is not this a *contradictory Faith*? Doth it not destroy our *natural Ideas*, our *congenit Notions*? For what are three Gods, but three such Persons: and what is the Idea, Notion or Conception of but *one God*, which is natural and congenit to every Man; but *one Infinite Almighty All-wise Person, one eternal Being, one absolutely perfect Spirit*?

As to the late Attempts of some, to satisfy (in part) these Difficulties: you know, Sir, how vain and fruitless they have been. Dr. Wallis saith, the three Divine Persons are only three *Modes* (that is, three *Qualifications*, or three *Respects* of GOD towards his Creatures) and they make one GOD as *Understanding, Will and Memory make one Soul*. But this, saith Dr. Sherlock, is both *Non-sensé and Heresy*. How doth Dr. Sherlock mend the matter? Why he hath advanced an Explanation of the Trinity, which Dr. Wallis and other Orthodox Men have, in Print, condemned as *Trithism*; that is, as introducing three Gods; a far worse Heresy than *Socinianism*. And thereupon they tell Dr. Sherlock, in Print also: 'That though he hath not been counted a Fool, yet it may become a wise Man to change his Opinion. In a Word, they have (in civil Language) invited him to a *Recantation*.

4. How is *DEVOTION* (another principal Instance of *Piety*) disturbed, by such a strange and unaccountable Object of it? Devotion is senseless and irrational; if the Object to be adored and worshipped, be not conceived by it. But such of Necessity must be the Worship and Devotion of Trinitarians; if in their *Prayers* they keep to their *Belief*. For they may talk of a Trinity; but themselves will not pretend, that they can think it: they can have no Conception of it, no more than of Words without Sense. We

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have seen very lately, that those who have endeavour'd to make Sense of this (as they call it) *Mystery*, or to represent it as a possible and intelligible thing; not only accuse one another of *Heresy*, and demand a *Recantation*, but are generally disclaimed by their own Party. The Party it self (if you mean thereby the general Body of Trinitarians) are for a *Trinity which no Man understands*; or ought to pretend to give other Account of it, than that 'tis an *incomprehensible Mystery*; and this Trinity they call their GOD. And thus by their own Confession, that Blame and Reprimand which our Saviour gives to the *Samaritans*, is equally applicable to them; and what he saith of himself and the *Jews*, is verified in the Unitarians: *Ti worship ye know not what: we know what we worship*, John 4. 22.

5. As to *Obedience*; the last part of our *Piety* towards GOD, and the most necessary: the Obligation to it, and all occasion for it is wholly taken away, by the Doctrine of the *Incarnation*, and the Superstruction which Trinitarians build thereon.

They say, GOD the Son being incarnate in our Nature, did by his *active Righteousness* fulfil for us all *Obedience*. By his Sufferings in this Life, his Death and Descent into Hell (which things they call his *Passive Righteousness*): He more than exhausted all that *Punishment*, that is or can be due to Sin. Whatsoever he did, was (they say) for us; and his Righteousness was meritorious of Heaven for never so many Sinners: and what he suffered was in our stead also; and one Drop of his Blood was sufficient to ransom a thousand Worlds from the Demerit of their Sins: that is, from Hell and all other Punishments. The manifest Consequences of these Doctrines, are these: (1.) Gospel-Obedience, good Works, (or a good Life) are in us unnecessary and superfluous; some of them have said, *burdensome and dangerous* to Justification and Salvation. (2.) Heaven is so much every Sinner's just Due and Debt from GOD, without any Amendment or Newness of Life on their Parts, that GOD would be unjust in

giving them no more, if more could be given. (3.) GOD should be *unrighteous*, if he punish'd Men for Sin, though unrepented of; because we have in Christ our Representative, both fulfilled all *Righteousness*, and suffered and paid a more than sufficient Price of Redemption.

The notorious Decay of *Christian Piety* in all Places and Ages, since these Doctrines have prevailed, plainly shows, That these are not *speculative* Consequences only, but such real Consequences, as do much influence the Practice of most Men. One may know and be assured, that 'tis these Consequences and this Belief, which bolsters Men up in their wicked Courses; because these are the things that comfort and support such, at their Deaths. The greatest of Sinners go away with Peace of Mind; on the Reflection and Consideration of the infinite *Merits* and *Satisfaction* of GOD their Redeemer. They have not, nor can out-sia his Satisfaction and Deserts, and applying both to themselves by believing in him; that is, by believing he merited and suffered for them in particular: therefore they depart, assuredly expecting of GOD the Rewards that are appointed to only *Innocence* and *Well-doing*.

I pray, Sir, desire your Friends who find Fault with us, for reviving (as they say) *unnecessary* Questions, to take it into serious and impartial Consideration; Whether Doctrines that have these Consequences, and also are such Hindrances of the other Branches of *Piety*, ought not to be again (and again) examined, whether they are (or can be) true?

The Fourth Reason against them is this;

They have crumbled the Christian Church, into innumerable and unconcillable Factions and Parties; so that there is no possible way of restoring Peace, but by returning to the *Belief* and *Profession*, of the Unity of God.

Next to Godliness or *Piety*, the Peace of the Christian Churches should be the Wish and Indebour of every Christian Man. But the Doctrines under Consideration, have to divided

divided the Churches called after the Name of Christ; that there is no Agreement but among those Professors, who believe there is but one GOD, or but one who is God. The Orthodox (as they call themselves) are *multifariouſly* divided, that they are not (perhaps) ten of them in a Party. The whole *Mobility* indeed of them go under the common Name of *Trinitarians*; and the Trinity and Incarnation are the general Tests of Orthodoxy, among them; but this is an *Orthodoxy only of Names and Words*; for in interpreting those Words and Names, I doubt very much, whether there are *ten* of them that are of a Mind. And the Differenc among them is so bitter and unreconcilable, that the *Anathema's* fly as thick and fast at one another, as at the Unitarians. As many Parties as they are, each Party is *heretical*, and in a State of Damnation, in the Opinion of all the rest. Their Divisions do respect some of them the Doctrine of the Trinity; and some the Incarnation: I will reckon them up as they shall occur to my Mind; without regarding that Method which might be given to Error.

1. The first Difference is about the *Filioq*; or whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son? This Quarrel divides them into two great and almost equal Parties; into the Church of the East, and the Church of the West. The Eastern Church, that is to say, all *Asia and Africa, Greece*, and the Islands of the *Archipelago*, all *Muscovy*, and the Provinces of *Illyricum*, a good Part of *Poland*, and some Part of *Hungary*; all these maintain, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only. But the Western Church, that is, all the *Roman Catholick Nations*, and all the *Reformed or Protestant*, contend that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. There is no Trinitarian but is in one of these Parties; and consequently none of them, but who is an *heretick* and in a State of Damnation, in the Judgment and Opinion of the one Moyety or half of his Fellow-Trinitarians. But because this damning of one

another, upon this Difference between them, has been of late so confidently denied by Dr. Wallis and Dr. Sherlock; I am obliged to take notice of the publick Declarations of these two Churches, against one another. The whole *Western Church*, in the first Canon of the second general Council of *Lions*, saith, *Damnatus & reprobatus, &c. i. e.* 'We damn and reprobate all such as presume to deny, that the Holy Spirit doth eternally proceed from the Father and from the Son. On the other Hand the Eastern Church excommunicates as *Scismaricks* and *Hereticks* all the *Latins* (so they call the Western Churches which hold the *Filioque*; or that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son) on every *Holy Thursday*, and all other principal Holy-days. F. *Simon Crit. Hist. of the Religions of the East*, p. 16, 17.

2. These two mighty Parties are again subdivided, into a great many factious Differences. Into those (for instance) who teach, that but one Person of their (supposed) Trinity was incarnate; and those who contend that the whole Trinity was incarnate.

3. Into those who say, all the Persons in the Trinity are equal; and those who (on the contrary) ascribe to the Father a Prerogative and Superiority, above the other two Persons; a Superiority not only *in Degrees of Order*, and *in Degrees of Dignity*, but *in Degrees of Power*.

4. Into those who say the Son is *autogenes*, i. e. hath underived Godhead, or is GOD of himself; and those that hold he is GOD of GOD, that is, deriveth from the Father, Being, Life and Godhead.

5. Into those who say the Son is so the Wisdom of the Father, that he is the Wisdom by which the Father is wise; and into those who deny this, as little better than Blasphemy; because 'tis as much as to say, that the Father (without the Son) is *Avios* and *allogos*, irrational and unwise.

6. In what Sense the three Persons are *consubstantial* (that is, have the same Substance or Essence, or Nature) doth unreconcilably divide them; the Ancients from the Me-

Moderns, and the Moderns from one another. One Party faith, Father, Son, and Spirit, are *generically* (or if you will *specifically*) consubstantial; that is, as three Men are consubstantial to one another, because all of them partake of the same *specifick* Nature, even the humane; or as three *Guineas* are consubstantial, being all of them Gold. The contrary Party faith, the Divine Persons are *numerically* consubstantial, i. e. do all subsist in the *self-same* Substance or Essence: as Understanding, Will and Memory, subsist in one and the same Soul.

7. They dispute, whether upon the Incarnation of *the Son*, the Lord Christ became two Persons; or was only one Person, whom they call by a compound and *monstrous* Name *Σωτηρῶν*, or GOD-MAN. If the latter of these, the Virgin Mary was *Σωτηρὸς*, *Mother of God*; if the other, she was only *Χριστοῦ*, *Mother of Christ*.

8. Besides the Dispute about the *Persons*, there is a great Controversy among them, about the *Natures* in the Lord Christ. The *Eutychian* Trinitarians say, the Lord Christ hath but one Nature; the rest of them (called *Melchites*) affirm two distinct Natures, an humane as well as a divine.

9. 'Tis controverted among them, whether in Consequence of the Incarnation of *the Son* or *WORD*, there followed two *Wills* and two *Actions* in the Lord Christ; or only one Action and one Will? Also,

10. Whether by Virtue of the Incarnation, the Body of the Lord Christ became incorruptible, and exempt from humane Affections and Passions; or not? Farther,

11. Whether the humane Nature of Christ, being personally united to *the Son* or *WORD*, were not by Virtue of that Union *Omniscient*; knowing even when the Day of Judgment shall be?

12. Whether this Proposition be Orthodox, or on the contrary *the Seed of the Devil*, one Person of the Blessed Trinity hath suffered for us?

13. Whether the Son and Spirit have been once *generated* and *breathed*, and that from all

Eternity; or whether they are *continually* and *always* begotten and breathed?

14. They all agree, that there are three Divine *Persons*: but to make this no Agreement, they are divided in explaining what is to be understood by the Word *Persons*. Some say, the three *Persons* are three *Properties* of the Divine Nature. But these agree not; some making them to be *Properties* in the same *numerical* Nature. Others take them to be *discretive* Properties in the *specifick* Nature. Others say, the three *Persons* are three *Modes* of Subsistence, or three *Relations*, or three *Respects* of GOD towards his Creatures, or three *Operations*. Others affirm the three *Persons* to be so many several or distinct *intellectual Beings* and *Spirits*; as distinct from one another as three humane Persons (or three Men) are.

15. To add now no more. They require us to believe, that *three* Almighty Persons are but one God: but in what Sense or Manner, three such Persons make one GOD, is not only disputed among them; but they are here also Apostates and Hereticks to one another. Some resolve this *Mystery* (as they call it) by an Unity or Oneness of Affection, Will and Design, between the three Persons: as St. Paul, speaking of himself and *Apollos*, saith, *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one*, 1 Cor. 3. 8. Others say, the Son and Spirit are one GOD with the Father, by their most perfect Subordination or Subjection to him: All three making but *one Monarchy*, are therefore said to be but *one GOD*.

Again, some say, the three Persons are one GOD by their *Emperichoresis*, or In-being in one another. But others by *Emperichoresis*, or *being in one another*, understand only this, that the Relation of *Father* supposeth and includeth that of *Son*, and *vice versa*; and not that by an impossible *real In-being*, the three Divine Persons are as it were mingled, and so confounded.

We have been told by others, that the three Persons are three distinct Minds and Spirits; and that the only possible Union of

B Spirits

Spirits is *mutual Consciousness*: So that (in short) the three Divine Persons are one GOD, *as* (or *because*) they are intimately conspicious to one anothers Thoughts and Actions.

Finally, Some say, the three Persons are one GOD; by their all having the same *numerical* Essence or Substance.

There are, Sir, you see, no fewer than fifteen Divisions among our Opposers; each Division consisting of two Parties at the least, some of them of four or five. So there are in all about *forty* Parties of them; of which incomparably the greater Number are *Hereticks* and *damm'd* to all the other Parties among them. Give me leave to make two Observations hereupon.

(1.) The great and common Boast of Trinitarians, even their *Number*; on the Account of which they presume to call themselves the Catholick (or *Universal*) Church, is merely a Boast. It may be (not untruly) said; *They are the least of Parties*, that ever profess'd a Religion. To comprehend this, Sir, you need only suppose, a Person resolving to join himself to their *universal* Church, and in order thereto determining upon all the forementioned Heads of Controversy among them. For by that time he has so done, that is, has chosen his side in all the aforesaid Questions: It will be no less than a *Miracle* if he finds himself Orthodox and Catholick, in the Opinion of *ten* Persons besides himself; it may be, the *universal* Church will dwindle into his *single* Person. For these *forty* Parties of Trinitarians are not all of them, so many visible and associated Sets or Churches; but divers of them are Divisions and Heresies in one and the same associated Church: the Members of the same Church are in these Points divided, and heretick to one another. And the Number *Forty* affords, so many *Changes*; that (as I said) perhaps it will be impossible to find *ten* Trinitarians, who are intirely of a Mind in all the aforesaid Points and Questions. This evidently reduces the (pretended) *Catholick* Church or *Universal* Church, to a much more con-

temprable Paucity, than are the Worshippers of one only GOD; or, as our Opposers by way of Jest sometimes call us, the *little Flock*: to which (however) their Father hath promised, *to give them a Kingdom*.

(2.) Whereas Trinitarians generally pretend; and that as an Argument which ought to end all further Dispute about these Matters; that the Trinity and Incarnation are *Traditions* derived down to our times, thro' all the intermediate Ages, and by all the Churches professing Christianity: these Divisions among them plainly demonstrate the contrary. For if the Trinity and Incarnation are *Traditions*, how comes it to pass, that Trinitarians are in such contrary Tales about them? how is it that *not ten* of them, perhaps not two of them, are in the same Story concerning them? They agree in nothing but the Words *Trinity* and *Incarnation*; and are forced to acknowledg, that those very Words are not only *unscriptural*, but not *very* ancient. *Tertullian* among the *Latins*, and *Clemens Alexandr.* among the *Greeks*, were the first of Christians, who used the word *Trinity*: and for *Incarnation*, I do not remember it to be so ancient.

But I have often wondred at this Pretence of most Trinitarians, that these Doctrines are *Traditions* from the first Ages of Christianity. On another Account it is this; All the *Criticks* (without excepting one) who have made a Judgment of the Writings of the Fathers of the first 300 Years; and particularly which of those Writings are genuine and uncorrupted, which wholly feigned or otherwise corrupted; I say, all the *Criticks* constantly make this a Note of Forgery or Corruption, if those Writings speak any what expressly or evidently of these Doctrines, namely, the Trinity and Incarnation, and the Questions on them depending. If these Doctrines were *Traditions* from the first Ages, the higher we ascend in Time, the more express and clear would the Tradition about them be: And in confessing that 'tis quite contrary, the *Criticks*, (that is, the more Learned of the Trinitarians) have given up the Pretence of Tradition

Tradition and Antiquity, and make it probable, I may say unavoidable, that these Doctrines are not Traditions from the Ancients, but Novelties, and Corruptions, and Depravations of genuine Christianity.

Whereas some have endeavour'd to evade this, by saying, Those Fathers have made no distinct Mention of, or Determination in these Points; because they were not controverted in their times, but afterwards began to be disputed and denied by Men affecting Novelty and Singularity. I answer, Nothing can be more frivolous or false than this Pretext. For, 1. 'tis notoriously false, that these Doctrines were not denied in the times of those Fathers. The *Nicæans* and *Theodotians* are more ancient than any of the Fathers; and yet 'tis well known, nay, confessed by all, that those Sects held the very Doctrines that are now called *Socinianism*. 2. Admitting there was as yet none (or very little) Controversy about these Points: yet because they are pretended to be the *Essentials* and *Fundamentals* of Christianity, so that he that denies them, is an *Heretic*; and he that knows them not, is *no Christian*; what can we rationally infer but this, that the Fathers, who have not delivered these Doctrines in any of their Writings, neither believed nor knew them; and that they are a part of the *gradual Corruptions* which have so unhappily deformed the Church. 3. Admitting once more, that there was as yet no Controversy about these Questions, which is the thing for which these learned Men contend, and their only Excuse on the behalf of those first Fathers; yet this makes wholly for the Unitarians. For besides this Defect, the Fathers and first Ages have spoken in their Creed, altogether as the *Socinian* Unitarians now do. The Creed called the *Apostles* (because it contains the true *Apostolick Doctrine and Tradition*) was the only Creed of those Fathers and Ages; it was, as one of them speaks of it, their *Regula Fidei immobilis irreformabilis*, i. e. the unchangeable unalterable Rule of their Faith. But this Creed expresses the very Doctrine of the present

Socinians, and not of the Church; as our Opposers themselves are constrained to own. It attributeth the Appellation *GOD*, and the Creation of Heaven and Earth, to only the *Almighty Father*. It describeth the Son as only a Man; declaring his Conception by the Holy Ghost in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary*, his Birth, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, without the least Intimation of an eternal Generation from the Essence of the Father; or that he or the Holy Ghost are *GOD*. It saith no higher thing of them, than it saith of the Holy Catholick Church; I believe in the Holy Ghost, I believe in the Holy Catholick Church: for so (all know) this Creed is read in the Original Greek, and by all the Fathers.

Is it now, Sir, conceivable, that these Doctrines should be (as Trinitarians pretend) a *Tradition* constantly preserved; when their own *Criticks* reject the Works of those first Fathers, as certainly spurious or forged, that speak any what directly or explicitly of the Trinity, and other depending Points and Questions; and when besides their common and only Creed is undeniably *Socinian*?

I deny not, Sir, that the Fathers of the first 300 Years, whose Writings have been suffered to come down to Posterity, began to corrupt the true Doctrine concerning the Person of our Saviour; making him to be much greater than he was. From about the Year 150, some of them were got into the Opinions, that were afterwards called *Arianism* or the *Arian* Trinity. But this I affirm, and all the *Criticks* among the Trinitarians do own it; that those Fathers spoke not of the Trinity, and of the Points and Questions thereon depending, as the Church now doth: they so held a kind of Trinity, as not to destroy the Unity of *GOD*; or that only the Father is truly and properly *GOD*. But this was a Digression.

I proceed to our fifth Reason against these Doctrines.

'They have been partly the direct and necessary Causes, partly the unhappy Occasions of divers scandalous and hurtful Errors and

Heresies; particularly of those which compose the gross Body of *Papery*.

'Tis well observed by some, that one *Absurdity* (or *Error*) being introduced, 'tis always the Ground and Occasion of many more. This Aphorism was never more sadly verified, than in the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. For no sooner were these Doctrines, by the Countenance of sanguinary and arbitrary Edicts of the *Byzantine* Emperours, become the more general and current Belief of the Churches, but there immediately broke in after them, that Swarm of absurd and heretical Doctrines which have no less than *subverted* the true and primitive Christianity.

1. The first-born of the Trinity was the Supremacy of the Pope. A few Bishops, not a fifth Part of the Bishops of the Catholick Church, having presumed in the Council of *Nice*, Anno 325, to determine for the whole Catholick Church so great a Point as this; that there is more than one Divine and Eternal Person: they sent the new Creed and Acts of that Council, to the Churches and Bishops who had not been present at it; to be by them subscribed. Hereupon the Bishops of *Asia* assembling themselves in about 30 provincial Councils, rejected the Word *Consubstantial* (or of the same Substance with the Father) in which the whole Mystery of *Trinitarianism*, and the Stress of the *Nicene* Creed, does lie: they would by no means admit of this Word. So saith *Marcus Ephesus*, the most Learned of the *Greeks*. *Council. Florent. Sess. 5.*

The Bishops of *Germany* and of *Belgium* (now the *Low-Countries*) and of *Gaul* (now *France*) and of the three Provinces of *Great Britain*, would not receive the Creed of *Nice*; giving this Reason, that the Word *Consubstantial* is unscriptural. So saith *St. Hilary*, that great Adversary of the *Arians* and other Unitarians, towards the beginning of his Book, *de Synod.*

The Bishops of *Africa* seem not so much as to have taken into their Archives or Registries, the Acts, Canons, or Creed of *Nice*.

For in the Year 418, in a Contest between them and the Bishop of *Rome*; they sent to *Constantinople* and *Alexandria*, for Copies of the Acts of the *Nicene* Council. *Council. Carthag. 6. Anno 418.*

The *Nicene* Council being thus refused and despised by all the considerable Nations professing Christianity: the *Nicene* Faction of Bishops began to consult of a way, how to settle their beloved Doctrine by political Arts; and at length they resolved upon this Expedient.

Anno 347, having got on their side the Emperor *Constantius*; and finding that the Bishops and Church of *Rome* were thorowly in their Interests, they assembled in Council at *Sardica*, and there made those famous Canons, on which (all learned Men know) the Authority and Supremacy of the Bishops of *Rome* is wholly grounded, and which those Bishops have ever since exercised. They designed by these Canons, to secure the Bishops and other Ecclesiasticks of the *Nicene* Party (now called *Trinitarians*) in their Bishopricks and other Church-Dignities; and to eject from time to time all *Unitarians*. But these *Politicians* were quite out, in hoping for such an Effect: they were so far from governing the Catholick Church by those Canons, that they served to no other purpose, but the enslaving the Makers of them and their Successors to the Popes of *Rome*. But for a fuller Account, Sir, of this *Sardican* Council (or rather Conventicle) I refer you to the *Acts* of *Athanasius*, lately published, in which the History of these *Be-trayals* of the Catholick Church is fully related.

2. In the Year 431, it was concluded and determined by the *Trinitarian* Faction, assembled in Council at *Ephesus*; that GOD the Son was truly and properly incarnate in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary*, and was born of her; so that *Mary* was not only *parthenot*, Mother of *Christ*; but *deivotot*, Mother of *God*. This blasphemous and contradictory Conclusion being once made; immediately they fell to worshipping and praying to her. If

GOD the Son is to be worshipp'd and invocated, shall we turn our Backs on the Mother of God? Shall not she be able to help us, at least by way of *Intercession*, to whom the Angel said, *Thou art highly honoured of GOD*; and who was (as it were) Wife to GOD the Father, and (in very Deed) Mother to GOD the Son? Father *Simon*, in the 3^d Chapter of the Critical History of the Religions of the East, saith, 'It is chiefly since the Birth of *Nestorianism* (that is since the Council of *Ephesus*) that so much respect hath been shown to the Virgin *Mary*. He means, she was not so much worshipp'd and invocated, till that Council had determined against *Nestorius*, that she is *Sacrosanct*, Mother of GOD. But Father *Simon* will never be able to show, that Holy *Mary* was at all worshipp'd or prayed unto, till the *Ephesus* Council had decreed, that she is to be deem'd the Mother of GOD. I do challenge him, or any for him, to produce any Testimony of the Ancients for the Worship and Invocation of *Mary*, that is so ancient as the *Ephesus* Council. This Father should therefore have dealt as ingenuously and freely in this Case, as is his manner in most others; or should have said nothing at all of this matter, but have chose some other Instance to confirm what he had to say. He should have owned what he knows to be the Truth, that as the Doctrine of the Incarnation produced this impious and senseless Conclusion, that *Mary* is the Mother of GOD; so that Conclusion was the Cause of the idololatrical Worship and Invocation of her, by the far greater part of Christians; even by all *Catholicks* (so called) and by the whole *Eastern* Church.

3. After *Mary* was worshipp'd and prayed to, it soon became the Custom to pray also to the *Apostles* and *Martyrs*, and afterwards to other *Saints*, and reputed *Saints*. For if *Mary* who (confessedly) was but a Woman and a *Saint*; though she was Mother of GOD; can help us by her *Intercession*: Why may not others, who were perhaps as great *Saints* as she?

4. The Practice of worshipping Holy *Mary*

and other *Saints*, had been but a little while received in the Churches; but it occasioned the Worship of their *Images* and *Pictures*. For if the *Saints* are to be worshipp'd, then so too are their *Images* and *Pictures*, with a relative *Worship*; that is, for the sake of those whom they represent; and so that the *Worship* ultimately terminates, not in the *Image*, but in the *Saint*. Even as the *Royal Chair*, or *Throne*, is worshipp'd for the *King's* sake, though he be absent.

5. The Question about the *Worship* of *Images*, was long contested in the Church. Those that stood for that *Worship*, thought it a very heinous *Disrespect* to our Saviour; that no Honour should be shown to his *Picture* or *Image*, no more than if it were the *Image* or *Picture* of an *Heathen God*. And this was a very common Argument and Allegation, against the Opposers of *Image-Worship*. In answer to this, the Fathers of the 7th General Council (anno 754) said, 'There is but one *Image* or Representation of the Lord Christ, & *μαρμαρὶν ἐν εὐχαρίστῳ ἄρτῳ*, the Bread given to us is the Sacrament. This Council consisted of 380 Fathers. But the contrary Party at length prevailed; and it was concluded, both for the having and worshipping of *Images*, and by way of Support thereto, that the Sacrament is not the Sign, *Image* or Representation of Christ; but true and very Christ; the Bread and Wine after the Words of the Consecration (though they agree not, which are the Words of Consecration) being turned into the real Body and Blood of Christ.

'Tis true the *Greeks* used not the word *μετεμώρισις* (*Transubstantiation*) till within this 300 Years, but they used equivalent words, *μεταμόρφωσις*, *μεταστοιχείωσις*, *μετασχηματισμός*, and such like. If any Wonder that such absurd and contradictory Doctrines, as the *Transubstantiation* and the real Presence, met with so little Opposition, in the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches; such an one may make these two Reflections. First, that those Churches were led as it were by the Hand to those Doctrines, by certain Consequences from the Doctrines.

Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, thus. There is a Trinity of Divine Persons, one of these was incarnate in the Womb of the Virgin; she is thereupon the Mother of GOD: if the Son of GOD is undoubtedly to be worshipp'd, then so too is the Mother of GOD; if Holy Mary, then others who were as much Saints as she; if Christ and the Saints, then for their Sakes their Images also, which are Signs of them. But Christ hath appointed the Sacramental Elements, as the only Signs of his Body: This is a Difficulty indeed: Therefore to defend Image-Worship, we will say, the Sacrament is not the Sign, but the very Body of Christ GOD-MAN. Secondly, it may be farther considered, that these Churches having already swallowed so many palpable Contradictions to Reason, Scripture, and first Antiquity in the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation; they now stuck at nothing. It became now the Note and Mark of an *Heretic*, to talk of Absurdities and Contradictions, in any Doctrine whatsoever; and the Character of a Catholick or Orthodox Person, if one had no regard at all to such things, but only to help forward the Humour and Current of Superstition; that is, to believe in *credible Tales* about the Saints, and *monstrous Opinions* concerning GOD, and the Sacraments of the Church.

6. That the Holy Scriptures are not a complete Rule, not sufficient to direct our Faith and Practice, without the Aid and Help of the Churches Tradition; all know is one of the Errors of the *Roman Catholics*, and which they could never yet be persuaded to give up. Ask them, what ground they have for such an Opinion? They answer as one Man; 'Tis notorious and undeniable that the principal Articles of the Christian Faith, the Trinity and Incarnation, cannot be proved by only Scripture. They profess openly and ingenuously, that the *Unitarians* have certainly beaten all their Opposers at those two Weapons, *mere Scripture* and *Reason*.

7. Another Birth of the Trinitarian Do-

ctrines is the *Papal Indulgences*; with all that Merchandize of Souls that has followed upon them. First, and by way of Foundation it is supposed, that the Lord Christ is GOD as well as Man; and that he being GOD incarnate in our Nature, his Righteousness and Sufferings must needs be of infinite Value. Next it is held, that the Sufferings of Christ, who is GOD-MAN, and of the Saints, are the *Treasure which he hath given to the Church*; which Treasure is to be dispensed by his *Vicar*, even the *Pope* or *Bishop of Rome*. The Dispensations of this Treasure to particular Persons, by the *Pope* himself, or those who are by him authorized, are called *Indulgences*; and have been bought at mighty Rates, by those who thought they had need of them, either for themselves or their dead Friends.

8. The last of their Paradoxes which I shall now mention, and which is common to all Trinitarians, and is (by their own Confession) a necessary Consequence of the Incarnation, is their Doctrine of the *Satisfaction*.

The Holy Scriptures say, Almighty God of his Grace and Goodness doth pardon our Sins, on the Conditions of Faith and Repentance on our Parts. The Scriptures are so express in ascribing our Pardon and Deliverance from Hell and Damnation, to the Mercy and Grace of GOD forgiving us; that Trinitarians dare not directly deny it so to be: but then because they pretend that GOD was incarnate, and suffered in our stead, they are forced to this Conclusion. That God hath freely pardoned, and yet was infinitely overpaid for all our Transgressions and Sins. That of his mere Grace, the Abundance and Riches of his Grace, he will pardon and save the Penitent, because he hath received for them a Price of Redemption, able to redeem as many Worlds; as he is pleased to pardon or save particular Sinners.

These are the Branches growing upon the Trinitarian Stock; these the Fruits of that Tree: But such as the Fruits or Consequences of these Doctrines have been, such also was their Original and Extraction; as

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we shall see in the next, which is our *sixth Reason* or Exception against them.

They are of *Paganick* or *Heathen* Descent and Original, and were introduced into the Church by the *Platonick* Philosophers, when they came over to Christianity.

One of our Disputes with the Trinitarians is concerning the Original of these Doctrines, from whom they are derived, or by whom they were invented? He that is generally (and indeed deservedly) confess'd to have written the most learnedly on this Subject, is *D. Cudworth*, in the *Intellectual System*. The Sum of what he saith, up and down, in that large Book in behalf of the Trinity, is this, 'The Christian Trinity is the very same with the Trinity of the *Platonick* Philosophers: Yet we are not to think, that the *Platonists* were the first Authors or Devisers of the Trinity: *Plato* learned it of *Parmenides*, *Parmenides* of the *Pythagoreans*, *Pythagoras* from *Orpheus* and the Books of *Egyptian Hermes*, and other *Hermæic* Books, which Books contained the Arcane Theology of the *Egyptians*. The *Magick* or *Chalday* Oracles, and the *Mithraick* Mysteries, both of them derived from *Zoroaster* (a most ancient and sage King of the *Bactrians* and *Persians*): express also the Mystery of the Trinity. The *Romans* had their *Capitoline* Trinity, which they derived from the *Phrygians*, they from the *Samothracians*. This Consent of Philosophers and Nations makes it more than probable, and no less than certain, that the Trinity was no humane Invention, for how should so many jump in the same groundless Conceit; but a Theology of Divine Original, even a Part of the *Cabala* Tradition or oral Law of the *Jews*, which they had from *Moses*, and he from GOD, which also is the Opinion of *Eusebius* and *Theodoret*, the ablest Historians and Antiquaries of the Primitive Church.

To make up weight I will sling into the Scale three Authorities, altogether as considerable and authentick, as any of these alledged by *Dr. Cudworth*. Let them take the *Græcian* Trinity, which is much older than

the *Roman*, *Phrygian* or *Samothracian*: Let them take the Books of *Hyssapes*, another most ancient and sage King of the *Atides*; which Books are celebrated by *Lactantius*, and other Fathers. We will also give them the *Sybillin* Oracles or Verses, which speak so expressly of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and even of the Incarnation, that no *Trinitarian* or *Arian* can deliver himself more explicitly or evidently.

He saith, 'How should so many Philosophers and Nations jump in the same groundless Conceit? Therefore the Trinity is a part of the *Jewish Cabala* or Oral Law, and was from them borrowed by other Nations, and by the Philosophers. I omit that the Nations and Philosophers by him mentioned are but few: But all Men know, there was an incomparably greater Consent of Nations and Philosophers in Polytheism, or the Acknowledgment and Worship of many distinct Gods. And that Consideration should have made this learned Author aware, that a surprising Consent of many is not always the Effect of a divine Tradition, but too often of a diabolical Suggestion, or other Causes.

Again, supposing the aforesaid Consent of Philosophers and Nations; yet 'tis very oddly father'd by a Protestant Divine, on a *Cabala* Tradition or Oral Law of the *Jews*. 'Tis one of the Principles of us Protestants, to disclaim all (pretended) *Cabala's* and Traditions, whether of *Jews* or *Christians*; and to believe there never was any other Divine Tradition, but only the Books of the Old and New Testaments.

I am ready to dispute this Point at large with any of our Opposers, whenever they shall think fit again to insist on it. In the mean time I take notice, that indeed the *Pharisees* having devised of their own Heads divers *Doctrines* and *Rites*; to give them the greater Authority, they called them Traditions, and pretended they were a *Cabala* or Oral Law, delivered originally by *Moses*. But the sounder part of the *Jews* themselves, even all the *Karaites* disown any such Tradition or Law. And our Saviour, whose Authority

rity I hope may be equivalent to *Eusebius* or *Tetradists*, calls these Traditions and this (pretended) Law, not a *Theology of divine Original*, but *Doctrines and Commandments of Men*, *Math. 15. 6, 9*. Nor is there any mention or least Intimation of such a *Cabala* or Law, in any of the Books of the Old Testament. And it seems incredible, that among so many of the *Holy Writers* there should be no where found so much as any Allusion to their *Cabala*, if indeed they had acknowledged or known of any such thing: Why did not *Esdrae*, when he collected into one, the scattered and dispersed Canon of Scripture, without omitting the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and others, or his Book of *Love*; why did he not at the same time commit to Writing, and publish the *Divine Cabala*, of so much more *Authority and Consequence*, than divers Pieces by him published and added to the Law?

Furthermore, admitting the (pretended) aforesaid Consent of some Philosophers and Nations, and also a Tradition, *Cabala*, or *oral Law* of the *Jews*: yet 'tis certain the Trinity is no part of that *Cabala*: For all the World knows that the *Jews*, though they strictly adhere to their *Cabala*, yet are so far from acknowledging a Trinity, that this Doctrine is the very Scumbling-block which hinders their entering into the Church. That whole Nation, and all the Sects of them, hold the Christians to be Polytheists and Idolaters, on the Account of the Doctrine of the Trinity. They pronounce Christianity to be a much worse Idolatry than *Jeroboam's Calves*: Which were not two fictitious Gods added to the true one; but only Images of the *Cherubims*, as the *Cherubims* were Hieroglyphick Resemblances of the one true GOD. So that though the *ten Tribes* were guilty of a kind of Idolatry, by their worshipping the true GOD under forbidden Resemblances, (for though the *Cherubims* themselves were set up by GOD's Order; yet not for Worship, or to common Sight) they were not Polytheists; they owned with all the rest of the *Jews*, but one Divine Person.

I doubt not, Sir, but that you perceive, that the whole Force of Dr. *Cudworth's* Argument, from the (supposed) Consent of some Nations and Philosophers, is enervated; and that such (pretended) Consent, notwithstanding the Trinity, is not (as he says) a *Theology of Divine Tradition*, but merely and solely of *Paganick and Heathen Extradition*; and brought into the Christian Church by the *Platonick Philosophers*, when they came over to Christianity.

I could now tell you, Sir, that whereas Dr. *Cudworth* brings in his *Philosophers, Oracles, Kings and Nations*, as believing and asserting the Trinity; even in the dark times of Heathenism: this is all mere *Flourish and Rhodomontade*. For, first, as to the Books of *Hermes, Zoroaster, and Hyksapes*, as also the *Sybillin and Chaldean or Magic Oracles*, they are all of them Forgeries, partly of the *Jews*, a little before the Nativity of our Saviour, partly of the Christians of the second and third Centuries. And this is so generally agreed, and so clearly demonstrated by the *Criticks*, that I was extremely surprized to see such Authorities alledged in a Book written by Dr. *Cudworth*, a Man (if any other) of true and real Learning. But so it is, that in the Defect of genuine and solid Proofs, the most Learned must have recourse to such as their Cause will afford. Next, as to the Nations and Philosophers by him mentioned; the Authors that knew those Nations and Writers, better than at this Distance of time we now can; particularly the most learned *Plutarch and Laertius*; these Authors say, that those Philosophers and Nations did not hold a Trinity, but a Duality of Principles or Gods, that is, a good and a bad GOD. And by what they say of those Gods or Principles, they seem to mean no more than what we are taught in Holy Scripture, concerning GOD and that malign (but subordinate) Spirit called the *Devil* and *Satan*.

But you will say, the *Platonists* held a Trinity of Divine Persons. Yes, some of them did: I say some of them; for the more learned *Platonists* (such as *Jamblichus, Proclus*, and

and Plato himself) did not think their (imagin'd) Trinity to be the supream GOD; but that over their Trinity there is one most simple *Monadick* or *solitary Being*, who is GOD of Gods, and the first Author of all things. If you ask, How the *vulgar Platonists* came to stumble upon a Trinity? I answer; They finding that the first Philosophers had called GOD, *Hen* and *Tagathon*, or *the One* and *the Good*; as also *Logos* *Nous* and *Sophia*, or *the Reason* (or *WORD*) *the Mind* and *Wisdom*: And finally, *Psyche*, *the Soul*, because he pervades and governs the World, as the Soul does the Body: They being the most fanciful and Enthusiastical of all Men, exceeding the *Quakers* in Enthusiasm, and the *Behmenists* in *Fancifulness* and *Affectation of Mystery*; mistook the aforementioned *Properties* of the Divine Nature for Persons, or wilfully and affectedly *allegoriz'd* them into *Persons*. *Hen* and *Tagathon* (*the One* and *the Good*) they made to be the same, even the Father and Fountain of the Deity; because all Number proceeds from *One* or *Unity*; and because *Goodness* (as these Philosophers often speak) is better than *Reason* or *Wisdom*. *Noies*, *Logos*, and *Sophia*, (that is, *Mind*, *Reason*, and *Wisdom*) being but equivalent Words, of these they made the second Person; or (as some of them call him) *the Son*. *Psyche*, or the Mundane Soul was the third; because *Reason* or *Wisdom* is better than, and superior to all things but *Tagathon* or *Goodness*.

There is, Sir, a certain Fate always attending on Error, by which she is first or last betrayed and exposed, even by those who seek to maintain and defend her. Therefore though Dr. Cudworth hath spent so many Sheets in discovering a Trinity among several Philosophers and Nations more ancient than the Platonists, yet he hath somewhere unsaid all again, and confess'd that the *Platonick* Trinity was nothing but an *Affectation* or *Blunder* of those Philosophers; and as I just now said, either their *Mistake* or their *Exchange* of the *Properties* of the Divine Nature, for so many Divine *Persons*. His own Words (at p. 206 of the *Intel. System*)

are these; 'We have propos'd the three 'principal *Properties* or *Attributes* of the Deity. The first whereof is infinite GOOD- 'NESS with *Fecundity*; the second infinite 'WISDOM or *Knowledge*; the third infinite 'active and *perceptive POWER*. From which 'three Divine *Attributes* and *Properties*, 'the *Pythagorians* and *Platonists* seem to have 'framed their *Trinity*. So at length this learned Person hath given it up to us, after so great Endeavours to prove the contrary, that the Trinity is of mere *Paganick* and *Heathen* Original, the *Device* or the *Mistake* of the *Platonists*.

Our last *Exception* or *Reason* is this.

'As the Trinity, when first brought into 'the Church by the *Platonists*, did by its natural Absurdity and Impossibility, give a 'Check and Stop to the Progress of the Gospel; so ever since it has served to propagate *Deism* and *Atheism*, and to hinder the 'Conversion of the *Jews* and *Mahometans*, 'and the *Heathen* Nations not yet turned to 'Christianity.

You cannot, Sir, expect in a single Letter, a large and ample Proof of this Assertion of mine: but however I will say hereupon enough to convince you, or any other unprejudic'd Person, that I am able to make such a Proof of it (whenever it shall be denied by our Opposers) as will very much surprize the Idolaters of these Doctrines.

For the first Part of this Assertion, I will now content my self with the plain Acknowledgment of *Lactantius*, *Instit. l. 4. c. 23*. This learned and eloquent Father, disputing concerning these very Doctrines, says, *Fortasse querat hic aliquis, &c.* 'Here some one 'may perhaps ask, How, though Christians 'profess to worship but one GOD, yet we 'seem to believe and hold two Gods, GOD 'the Father, and GOD the Son? *This Doctrine* 'hath been a great *Stumbling-block* to many, who 'confess that in other Points of the Christian 'Doctrine, we speak what is probable and fit 'to be embraced, but in this they think we 'fumble, that we hold a second GOD, and 'him also a mortal one, or one who could die,

You may please, Sir, here to take notice, that the Reason why *Lactantius* mentions only two Gods, the Father and the Son; was because the Divinity of the Holy Spirit was not yet believed, or (I think) so much as mentioned by any. The Council of *Nice* it self durst not say the Holy Ghost is GOD; no, nor the Council of *Constantinople* in express Terms: For as *Petavius* has noted the Party of the *Pneumatocoi* (i. e. those who denied the Divinity of the Spirit) were yet the more powerful Party in the Church. *D. Petav. de Trin. l. 1. c. 14. s. 14. and 21.* See also *Hutius, Origenian. l. 2. c. 2. q. 2. sect. 10.*

As to *Deism* and *Atheism*: Some (otherways discerning Men) have not Judgment enough to distinguish between the *corrupted* and the *sincere* Parts of Religion, but they consider the whole of Religion together, and judg it to be all of it *false*, or all *true*. From these two sorts of Men proceed all the *Deists*, and most, if not all *Atheists*. The Atheist rejects all Religion whatsoever, for the sake of some unaccountable and absurd things, which vulgarly pass for the principal Articles of Religion. The Deist, far more judicious, rejects hereupon only all positive or *revealed* Religion, and takes up with natural Religion, i. e. with the Belief of a GOD, whose Power and Wisdom he plainly sees in the *Structure* and *Contrivance* of the World, and with the Dictates of Reason, and our congenit and natural Notions concerning moral and immoral, or good and evil.

This, Sir, is not a Place to argue either against the Deist or Atheist; I had here only to observe, that from the absurd Corruptions of true Religion, by *injudicious* or *fanatical* Men, have and do arise all the *Deism*, and most part of the *Atheism* with which our Age is infected.

There is so much the more Reason for our utmost Endeavours, to withstand the farther Progress of those two, *Deism* and that Pest of *Atheism*, by purging Religion of all the contradictory and impossible Doctrines which give occasion to those Mistakes, because Christianity has already lost so much ground to

Mahometism or *Turcism*. *Mahomet* is affirmed by divers Historians, to have had no other Design in pretending himself to be a Prophet, but to restore the Belief of the *Unity of GOD*, which at that time was extirpated among the Eastern Christians, by the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. They will have it, that *Mahomet* meant not his Religion should be esteemed a new Religion, but only the Restitution of the true Intent of the Christian Religion. They affirm moreover, that the *Mahometans* learned Men call themselves the *true* Disciples of the *Messias* or Christ; intimated thereby that Christians are Apostates from the most essential Parts of the Doctrine of the *Messias*; such as the Unity of GOD; and that he is to be worshipp'd without Images or Pictures, in Spirit and in Truth. But whatsoever the Design of *Mahomet* was, 'tis certain *Mahometism* has prevailed over greater Numbers and more Nations, than at this Day profess Christianity: Nay, it has worn Christianity out of great part of *Europe*, most of *Asia*, and all *Roman Africa*; not by Force and the Sword, for the *Mahometans* grant Liberty of Religion to all the conquered Provinces of Christians; but by that one Truth in the *Alchoran*, the Unity of GOD. The *Naturalness* of their Belief of the Unity of God, and the unreconcilable Inconsistence of the Trinity with that Belief, make it impossible ever to reconcile the *Mahometans* (whether *Turks*, *Moors*, or *Persians*) to Christianity. This is that by which both they and the *Jews* are perpetually and without Hope of regaining them, alienated from us, that they suppose the Trinity to be the Doctrine of all Christians; and from thence conclude, that *modern* Christianity is no better nor other than a sort of *Paganism* and *Heathenism*.

The Nations also who are yet *Pagans*, reject Christianity for the sake of the corrupt Doctrines against which we are arguing. Of this there has been a calamitous Instance in the *Tartars*. This warlike People, who have made themselves so terrible by their *Cavalry*, to the great Kingdoms of *Poland* and *Mosco-*

us, and even to *Germany* it self, were lost to Christianity by Occasion of the Doctrines of the Trinity, &c. In the Year 1246, Pope *Innocent IV* sent an Ambassage to *Bati Cham* of *Tartary*, inviting him to the Christian Religion: *Bati* received the Ambassage civilly; but when he heard from the Religious sent to instruct him, what were the chief Points of the Christian Faith, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Transubstantiation, &c. He thank'd the Pope for his Kindness, and promised to make no Incurfions into the Christian Countries for five Years next ensuing; but withal declared himself not satisfied with the Christian Religion, as represented to him. Immediately after the *Saracens* sent a like Ambassage to *Bati*, recommending to him (saith the Historian) *Mahometis sectam tanquam plausibilem*, i.e. *The more plausible Sect of Mahomet*: And these prevailed, *Bati* and the whole Nation of the *Tartars* submitting to *Mahometism*, in which they continue to this Day, and are both the *Shield* and *Sword* of that way of acknowledging and worshipping GOD. *L. Savius Comment. rerum in Orbe Gest.*

These, Sir, are the Damages sustained by Christianity, by occasion of these Doctrines: I believe by that time you have well considered them, you will conclude, these Doctrines will never repair half the Wastes they have already made in our Holy Religion; and that they are honest Men who are jealous

of, and desirous to inquire very strictly into the Grounds of such *Paradoxical* Perswasions as have already given such deep Wounds to our common Cause of Christianity.

I will conclude, Sir, for this time, with only telling you, that the *Reasons* I have given, might all of them have been much amplified and illustrated; and some of them greatly exaggerated. But that is a Design hardly practicable in a Letter; the Brevity of a Letter even constrained me to lay before you what I had to say in few Words, and in a plain and sincere Discourse, without the Art or Pomp of Rhetorick. Nor am I offended at it; for our Cause needs not those Helps. Till our Opposers can extinguish Reason and common Sense in Men; while there are any left who are not wholly Priest-ridden, who have not abandoned the Conduct and Guidance of Reason and natural Knowledge for that of a Confessor, that is to say, a *Divine Light* for an *Ignis fatuus*, or *Will-a-wisp*: So long (I think) we need not be very solicitous, whether our Discourses or Writings concerning these Doctrines, be altogether so laboured and artificial, as our Opposers must take Care that theirs are.

S I R,

I am your most

Obliged and Assured.

F I N I S.